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ABSTRACT

To portray the status of minimum competency testing programs nationwide, as of June 30, 1979, on-site visits were conducted with directors of all 31 state programs and 20 local district programs. This typology classifies and indexes the information contained in the summary and comprehensive reports (TM 800 350-351) along the following dimensions: legislative and policy history; implications for students and programs; competencies to be tested; source of responsibility for setting standards; response mode and type of test (in-house, commercial, tailored); government agent responsible for test administration and scoring; reporting audiences; parent and citizen involvement; and provisions for special education or multilingual populations. The typology chart characterizes these dimensions as: characteristic of each program, optional/conditional, or undecided. (CP)

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NOTE TO THE READER

The materials contained in this report were prepared for the National Institute of Education (NIE), Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, under contract number (400-79-0003). This contract was awarded December 15, 1978, as the result of a competitive bidding procedure, to National Evaluation Systems, Inc. (NES), a firm that has developed and administered minimum competency tests under contract to State and local education agencies.

The purpose of this contract was to obtain previously unavailable descriptive information about minimum competency testing programs for the enlightenment of educators, researchers, and others interested in this area. Information on the consequences or impacts of these programs was not within the scope of work for this contract. However, NIE is currently planning a complementary study that will focus on program impacts.

In obtaining the descriptive information presented here, the NES project staff, during the spring of 1979, interviewed the directors of all State minimum competency testing programs and of 21 local district programs. Subsequent to these visits, NES staff developed written program descriptions, and these were sent to the program directors for verification. It is these verified program descriptions that form the basis for this report.

It should be emphasized that the information presented here provides a snapshot of the status of minimum competency testing programs as of June 30, 1979, and, owing to the dynamic nature of these programs, may not portray the programs as they are operating today.

Further, it should be emphasized that any opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect NIE or HEW position or policy, and no endorsement of minimum competency testing or of any model described in this report by NIE or HEW should be inferred.

A Study of Minimum Competency Testing Programs

FINAL TYPOLOGY REPORT

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PREFACE

Preparing a typology of minimum competency testing programs comprised the second major task on this nationwide study of such programs. The purpose of the typology is to characterize the 31 state and 20 local district programs included in the study along a common set of dimensions or traits.

Every program in the study was visited for the purpose of collecting information, both published and informal, about the program's policy history, goals, competencies assessed, grade levels targeted for assessment, test instruments, performance standards, test administration and dissemination, provisions for special populations, program resources, evaluation, and future directions. During the site visits, a preliminary analysis was conducted to help determine relevant dimensions that program administrators viewed as characteristic of MCT programs in general and their programs in particular. Following this preliminary data gathering, NES developed an initial set of typology dimensions with appropriate variations within each one. One overall dimension that was selected, for example, was "Use of Test Results." Within this category, two subcategories were delineated--"For Students" and "For Programs"--since test results in MCT programs can signify consequences to either or both groups. Then within each of these, further subclasses were defined to characterize the extent of variation that can occur in each.

Both NIE and the Advisory Committee for the study reviewed the typology dimensions and format and offered suggestions for revisions. Following the incorporation of these suggestions, each of the programs in the study was classified on all dimensions.

The Typology Report was prepared by Marcy R. Perkins, Dolores Harris, and Mary Tobin, with assistance from Jan Johnson and Linda Lang, and input and review from William Gorth.

Introduction

A typology is defined as a "classification based on types," and a type is something having "qualities common to a number of individuals that distinguish them as an identifiable class." In order to classify minimum competency testing programs according to a typology, then, the qualities or dimensions along which programs can vary must be identified, along with the general types of programs that can exist within each set of dimensions. The purpose of this report is to present such a framework or classification scheme and to catalog according to it the 31 State and 21 local district programs that were studied in this project.

The typology dimensions, along with their specific indicators, are generally defined in Appendix A of this report. The narrative which follows is specifically designed to present an overview and discussion of the major dimensions or components that generally appear to be present in minimum competency testing programs. Then, within each component or dimension, the kinds of variation that typically occur in various programs are described, with reference to specific programs that both fit the general pattern and diverge in some way from the established pattern. This discussion is not intended to present detailed descriptions of individual programs, nor will it offer summary statistics with respect to the dimensions. For those discussions, the reader is referred to the Comprehensive Report and the Summary and Analysis Report, respectively.

In reading the Typology Chart, it is important to realize that a system of "multiple checks" was used for coding individual programs; this simply means that all dimensions applicable to a program were marked, even if they appear to be contradictory. In the area of "standards," for example, both "State" and "local" may be marked as the agency responsible for determining standards in a given program. This generally means that the State has set standards on one (or more) test(s) utilized in the program, while the local districts are responsible for determining standards for whatever other tests are utilized.

While the Typology Report is not designed to repeat the same information as that contained in the Summary and Comprehensive Reports, it is intended to be used in conjunction with them. The dimensions described here are consistent with the major topics presented and discussed in both other reports. The typology chart included here also serves as an index to the programs reported and described in the Comprehensive Report. Therefore, to obtain a complete picture of the results of the study, the reader should refer to all three reports.

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TYPOLOGY DIMENSIONS CHART

PROGRAM	POLICY								USE OF TEST RESULTS						
	Initial Mandate			Date of Initial Mandate	Date of Completed Implementation	Associated Litigation			For Students					For Programs	
	Legislative Action	State Board Action	Local Board Action			Federal Level	State or Local Level	None	High School Diploma	Special Recognition on Diploma	Grade Promotion	Mandatory Remediation	Optional Remediation	Mandated Curriculum Changes	
														Yes	No
					STATE										
Alabama		■		1977	1980			■		★			■		■
Arizona	■			1972	1978			■	■		■				■
California	■			1976	1979			■	■			■			■
Connecticut	■			1978	1980			■				■		■	
Delaware		■		1972	1981		■								■
Florida	■			1971	1983	■			■			■			■
Georgia		■		1971	1978			■					■	■	
Idaho		■		1977	1979			■		■					■
Illinois	■			1978	1980			■	✱	✱	✱	✱	✱		■
Kansas	■			1978	1980			■					■		■
Kentucky	■			1978	1979			■					■	■	
Louisiana	■			1976	1980			■			✱			■	
Maine	■			1978	1980			■					✱		■
Maryland		■		1972	1986			■	■			■			■
Massachusetts		■		1978	1991			■					■		■
Michigan				1969	1979			■					■		■
Missouri		■		1978	1979			■					✱		■
Nebraska		■		1975	1975			■					■		■
Nevada	■			1977	1978			■	■				✱		■
New Hampshire		■		1977	1984			■							■
New Jersey	■			1976	1978			■				■		■	
New Mexico		■		1978	1979			■		■		■			■
New York		■		1975	1981			■	■				■		■
North Carolina	■			1977	1979		■		■			■			■
Oregon		■		1972	1976			■	■				✱		■
Rhode Island		■		1978	1981			■							■
South Carolina	■			1978	1985			■				■			■
Tennessee		■		1977	1981			■	■				■		■
Utah		■		1977	1980			■	■				■		■
Vermont		■		1975	1979			■	■				✱		■
Virginia	■			1975	1990		■		■			■			■
Santa Clara, CA	■			1976	1979			■	■			■			■
Denver, CO			□	1958	1960			■	■			■			■
Hillsborough, FL	■			1976	1979	■			■			■			■
Thomas Co., GA		■		1975	1980			■	■					■	
Gary, IN			□	1974	1979			■	■			■			■
Bettendorf, IA			□	1977	1980			■	■				■		■
Columbus, KS			□	1976	1979			■	■		■	■			■
Fitchburg, MA			□	1978	1981			■					■		■
Detroit, MI			□	1977	1980			■		■		■		■	
Lawton, MI			□	1973	1981			■	■		■	■		■	
Omaha, NE			□	1974	1975			■	■			■			■
CONVAL, NH			□	1977	1981			■	■		■	■			■
Char-Mecklenbg, NC			□	1975	1979			■					■		■
Rocky River, OH			■	1976	1979			■	■			■			■
Salem, OR		■		1974	1976			■	■		✱	■			■
Portland, OR		■		1974	1978			■	■		■	■			■
Houston, TX			□	1978	1979			■		■	■	■			■
So. Burlington, VT		■		1975	1978			■	■				■		■
Orange Co., VA	■			1978	1981			■	■		★	■			■
Kanawha, WV			■	1977	1979			■		■			■		■

■ Characteristic of Program □ Local Initiative Prior to State Mandate ✱ Optional/Conditional ★ Undecided

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TYPOLOGY DIMENSIONS CHART

PROGRAM	COMPETENCIES																																			
	Emphasis			Source				Specific Area by Grades Tested																													
								Reading				Mathematics				Writing				Speaking				Listening				Other								
	Academic Skills	Life Skills	Both	State	Local Districts	Both	At least one K-3	At least one 4-6	At least one 7-8	At least one 9-12	At least one K-3	At least one 4-6	At least one 7-8	At least one 9-12	At least one K-3	At least one 4-6	At least one 7-8	At least one 9-12	At least one K-3	At least one 4-6	At least one 7-8	At least one 9-12	At least one K-3	At least one 4-6	At least one 7-8	At least one 9-12	At least one K-3	At least one 4-6	At least one 7-8	At least one 9-12						
	STATE																																			
Alabama			■	■			■	■		■	■	■		■	■	■		■	■																	
Arizona	■				■		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*																		
California			■		■			■	*	■		■	*	■		■	*	■																		
Connecticut	■			■	■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■																		
Delaware	■			■			■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■																		
Florida			■	■			■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■																		
Georgia		■				■		■	■			■	■	■																	■	■	■			
Idaho	■			■						■				■				■				■														
Illinois			■		■					■				■				■				■				■				■						
Kansas			■	■			■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■																						
Kentucky	■			■			■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■													■	■	■	■		
Louisiana	■			■								■	■	■		■	■	■													■	■	■			
Maine	■			■					■	■			■	■			■	■																		
Maryland			■	■						■				■				■																		
Massachusetts			■	■	■		■	■	*	■	■	■	*	■	■	■	*	■	■	■	*	■	■	■	*	■									
Michigan	■							■	■			■																								
Missouri			■	■					■	*			■	*																			■	*		
Nebraska	■			■				*	*	*		*	*	*																			*	*	*	
Nevada	■			■			■	■		■	■	■		■	■	■		■																		
New Hampshire	■			■				■	■	■		■	■	■		■	■	■															■	■	■	
New Jersey	■			■			■	■		■	■	■		■																						
New Mexico			■	■						■				■				■				■														
New York	■			■			■	■	*	■	■	■	*	■	■	■	*	■																		
North Carolina			■	■						■				■				■																		
Oregon			■		■				*	■			*	■			*	■				*	■			*	■									
Rhode Island			■	■				■	■	■		■	■	■																	■	■	■			
South Carolina			■	■			■	■	■	*	■	■	■	*		■	■	*																■		
Tennessee	■			■				■	■	■		■	■	■																	■	■	■			
Utah			■		■				*	■			*	■			*	■				*	■			*	■									
Vermont			■	■						■				■				■				■				■										
Virginia			■	■	■		■	■		■	■	■		■																	■	■			■	
Santa Clara, CA			■		■			■	*	■		■	*	■		■	*	■																		
Denver, CO	■				■					■				■				■																		
Hillsborough, FL			■	■				■	■	■		■	■	■		■	■	■																		
Thomas Co., GA			■		■			■	■	■		■	■	■		■	■	■		■	■	■		■	■	■		■	■	■						
Gary, IN	■				■					■				■				■				■														
Bettendorf, IA			■		■		■			■	■			■	■			■													■					
Columbus, KS	■				■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■																						
Fitchburg, MA			■	■	■		■	■		■	■	■		■	■	■		■	■	■		■	■	■		■		■							
Detroit, MI			■		■					■				■				■																		
Lawton, MI	■	■					■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■																						
Omaha, NE			■		■					■				■				■				■														
CONVAL, NH			■		■																										■	■	■			
Charlotte-Mecklenbg, NC	■				■					■				■																						
Rocky River, OH			■		■					■				■				■																		
Salem, OR			■		■					■				■	■	■	■																		
Portland, OR	■				■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■																		
Houston, TX	■				■		■	■	■		■	■	■																		■	■	■			
So. Burlington, VT			■	■			*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Orange Co., VA			■			■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■		■																■	■	■	■		
Kanawha, WV			■		■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■																					

■ Characteristic of Program * Optional/Conditional ★ Undecided

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TYPOLOGY DIMENSIONS CHART

PROGRAM	STANDARDS											TEST INSTRUMENTS						
	Source			Basis				Responsibility				Source				Response Mode		
	State	Local with State Approval	Local Districts	Total Score for Test (combined subject area)	Total Score for Each Subject Area	Scores on Subsets of Items within Subject Area	Varies According to Locale	State	Local with State Approval	Local		Developed In-House	Developed by Contractor	Tailored by Test Publisher	Commercial, Off-the-Shelf	Multiple-choice	Open-Ended (e.g., writing)	Performance-based
							STATE											
Alabama	■					■		■				■	■			■	■	
Arizona			■				■			■		*	*	*	*	*	*	*
California			■				■			■		*			*	*	*	*
Connecticut	■		■	■			■	■	■			*	■		*	■	■	■
Delaware	■	■				■		■	■			■			■	■		■
Florida	■					■		■					■		■	■	■	
Georgia	■		■			■		■				■			■	■		
Idaho	■				■			■				■	■			■	■	
Illinois			■				■			■		■	■			*	*	*
Kansas	■					■		■					■			■		
Kentucky	■					■		■	■						■	■		
Louisiana	■					■		■					■			■	■	
Maine	■				■	■		■					■			■	■	
Maryland	■					■		■					■			■	★	
Massachusetts			■				■	■	■									
Michigan	■					■		■				■				■		
Missouri	■		■			■	■	■		■		■				■	■	■
Nebraska	■		*			■	■	■	*			■						■
Nevada	■				■	■		■				■	■		■	■	■	
New Hampshire			■				■			■		*			*	*	*	*
New Jersey	■				■			■					■			■		
New Mexico	■		■		■			■				■			■	■	■	
New York	■				■			■				■	■			■	■	
North Carolina	■				■			■						■		■		
Oregon			■				■			■		■				*	*	*
Rhode Island	■			★	★			■				■			■	■	★	★
South Carolina	■			★	★	★		■				■				■		■
Tennessee	■		■	■			■	■		■		■			■	■		
Utah			■				■			■		*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Vermont	■					■				■		*			*	*	*	*
Virginia	■		■		■	■	■	■	*	■		*	■		■	■	■	■
Santa Clara, CA			■				■			■		■	■			■	■	
Denver, CO			■		■					■		■	■			■		
Hillsborough, FL	■		■	■	■			■		■		■			■	■	■	
Thomas Co., GA			■			■				■		■				■	■	■
Gary, IN			■			■				■		■	■			■	■	■
Bettendorf, IA			■		■					■				■		■		
Columbus, KS			■	■	■					■		■				■	■	
Fitchburg, MA			■	★	★	★				■		■				■	■	
Detroit, MI			■	★	★	★				■		■	■			■	■	
Lawton, MI			■			■				■					■	■	■	■
Omaha, NE			■			■				■		■			■	■	■	■
CONVAL, NH			■			■				■		■				■	■	■
Char-Mecklenbg, NC			■		■					■		■				■		
Rocky River, OH			■		■					■				■		■		
Salem, OR			■		■					■		■				■	■	■
Portland, OR			■			■				■		■				■	■	■
Houston, TX			■		■					■					■	■		
So. Burlington, VT	■					■				■		■					■	■
Orange Co., VA	■		■			■		■	■			■	■			■	■	■
Kanawha, WV			■		■					■		■				■		

■ Characteristic of Program * Optional/Conditional ★ Undecided

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TYPOLOGY DIMENSIONS CHART

PROGRAM	TEST ADMINISTRATION		SCORING			REPORTING/DISSEMINATION							PARENT/CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT			
			Who Scores			Reports Sent To										
	State Responsibility	Local Responsibility	State	Local Districts	Contractor/Publisher	Students	Parents	Teachers	Board of Education	School Administrators	Legislators	Public/Media	In Recommending Policy	In Competency Definition	In Standard Setting	In Item Bias Review
						STATE										
Alabama		★	★		★	■	■	■	■	■		■	■	■		
Arizona		■		■		*	*									
California		■		■		■	■	■		■		■		■	■	
Connecticut		■		■	■	■	*		■	■	■	■		■		
Delaware		■			■	■	■	■	■	■				■		
Florida		■			■	■		■	■	■						
Georgia		■			■	■	■	■	■	■				■	■	
Idaho		■	■			■	■	■		■		■				
Illinois		■		■		*	*					*	■	■	■	
Kansas		■			■				■	■	■			■		
Kentucky		■	■	*					■	■	■					
Louisiana		■			■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■				
Maine		■			■	■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	
Maryland		■	■			■	■	■	■	■		■		■		
Massachusetts		■		■		■	■		■	■		■		■	■	
Michigan		■			■	■	■	■	■	■		■		■		
Missouri		■	■	■		■	■	■	■	■						
Nebraska		■		■		■		■								
Nevada		■	■	*	■	*	*	*	■	■		■				
New Hampshire		■		■					■			■				
New Jersey		■	■	*		■	■			■		■		■		
New Mexico		■		■	■	■			■	■			■	■		
New York		■	■	■		■	■					■			■	
North Carolina		■			■	■	■		■	■		■				
Oregon		■		■		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	■	■		
Rhode Island	★	★	■	■					■				■	■	■	
South Carolina		■	*			■	■		■	■	■	■		■		
Tennessee		■	■			■	■		■	■			■	■		
Utah		■		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*		■	■	
Vermont		■		■		■			■	■	■					
Virginia		■	*	■		■		■	■	■		■		■		
Santa Clara, CA		■		■	■	*	■	*	*	*	*	*		■		
Denver, CO		■		■		■	■	■						■		
Hillsborough, FL		■	■	■		■		■	■	■						
Thomas Co., GA		■		■		■	■	■	■	■		■		■		
Gary, IN		■		■				■		■			■			
Bettendorf, IA		■		■	■		■								■	
Columbus, KS		■					■	■		■		■	■		■	
Fitchburg, MA		■				■	■	■	■	■						
Detroit, MI		■		■		■	■	■		■				■	■	
Lawton, MI		■		■	■	■	■	■								
Omaha, NE		■	■	■		■	■	■		■			■	■		■
CONVAL, NH		■		■		■	■	■		■		■	■	■	■	■
Charlotte-Mecklenberg, NC		■		■		■	■					■				
Rocky River, OH		■			■		■								■	
Salem, OR		■		■		■	■	■					■			
Portland, OR		■		■		■	■	■		■		■	■	■	■	
Houston, TX		■		■	■	■	■	■		■			■	■	■	
So. Burlington, VT		■		■		■		■	■	■		■		■	■	
Orange Co., VA		■	■	■		■	■	■		■		■	■			
Kanawha, WV		■		■		■	■			■				■	■	

■ Characteristic of Program * Optional/Conditional ★ Undecided

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TYPOLOGY DIMENSIONS CHART

PROGRAM	PROVISIONS FOR SPECIAL POPULATIONS											
	Any Provisions Made					Formal Provisions For			Type of Provisions Made			
	Exemptions from Testing	Formal Provisions for Groups	Formal Provisions for Individuals	Case-by-Case	None	Transfer Students	Multilingual	Special Education	Special Diplomas/ Certificates	Differentiated Standards	Tests with Different Content	Tests with Different Formats
				STATE								
Alabama	■		■					■	★	★	★	★
Arizona			■				■	■	■			
California			■			■	■	■		✱		
Connecticut	■	■					■	■				
Delaware			■					■	■			■
Florida	■	■	■				■	■	■			✱
Georgia	■		■				■	■				
Idaho	■			■		■		■				■
Illinois					■							
Kansas	■	■						■				
Kentucky	■			■				■		■		
Louisiana				■				■				■
Maine	■			■				■				
Maryland	■	■				■		■				
Massachusetts	■	■	■			■	■	■				
Michigan	■		■				■	■				
Missouri	■		■					■				■
Nebraska					■							
Nevada				■				■				✱
New Hampshire					■							
New Jersey			■				■	■				■
New Mexico					■							
New York			■				■	■				■
North Carolina				■				■				■
Oregon				■				■		■	■	
Rhode Island					✱							
South Carolina				■				■		✱	✱	✱
Tennessee	■		■					■				■
Utah	■		■	✱				■				✱
Vermont				■				■				■
Virginia	■			■			■	■				■
Santa Clara, CA		■						■		■		
Denver, CO					■							■
Hillsborough, FL	■	■	■	■			■	■	■			■
Thomas Co., GA			■					■				
Gary, IN	■	■						■				
Bettendorf, IA					✱							
Columbus, KS	■			■				■				
Fitchburg, MA	■		■	■		■	■	■				
Detroit, MI		★	★	★			★	★	★			★
Lawton, MI				■			■	■	■	■		
Omaha, NE	■	■	■					■	■	■		
CONVAL, NH			■					■		■		
Charlotte-Mecklenberg, NC	■			■				■				■
Rocky River, OH				■				■		■		
Salem, OR				■			■	■				
Portland, OR	■			■			■					
Houston, TX	■		■				■	■		■		
So. Burlington, VT			■					■		■		
Orange Co., VA	■			■				■	■	■		
Kanawha, WV	■			■				■				■

■ Characteristic of Program □ Local Initiative Prior to State Mandate ✱ Optional/Conditional ★ Undecided

Policy

The policy of a minimum competency testing program cannot truly be called a component by which the program may be typified. Rather, it is that part of the program which may itself specify the components and requirements that then are the basis for classifying the program. There is one aspect of policy, however, that can serve as a basis for classification, and that is the source of initial mandate for the program.

Programs may be instigated in a number of ways. First, the legislature may initiate competency testing by passing one or more laws which contain the governing requirements for such a program and/or specify the agents to be responsible for determining/carrying out the requirements.

The alternative to legislative action initiating a statewide minimum competency testing program is for the State Board to pass such a mandate. In some cases, this mandate may occur in the context of the Board being empowered by State law to establish State standards for public education (e.g., Oregon, Massachusetts). In other cases, the mandate may be in the form of a directive to local districts from the Board and Department of Education in response to concerns expressed in the State about education (e.g., Tennessee).

Finally, in States which have no State Board or legislative mandate to institute minimum competency testing, local boards of education may opt to pass such a mandate for their own districts. Rocky River, Ohio and Denver, Colorado are two examples of districts where this type of action has occurred.

For summaries of trends concerning how and when minimum competency testing programs have been initiated, as well as details about programs which have faced litigation, the reader is referred to the Summary and Analysis Report and the Comprehensive Report.

Uses of Test Results

Programs may be characterized in terms of the ways in which test results affect, on the one hand, the students who are tested and, on the other, the educational programs within which testing takes place.

For students. With respect to consequences to students of testing, test results may determine whether or not a student is graduated from high school or promoted from one grade to another; test scores may also serve a diagnostic function within a program by identifying students with deficiencies in the prescribed skills and by indicating the nature and severity of these deficiencies for the purposes of remediation.

Although none of the programs under study use test scores as sole determinants for high school graduation or grade promotion, many minimum competency programs stipulate that a student must meet established standards of competency in order to advance to a higher grade or to receive a high school diploma. When high school graduation is linked to successful achievement on a minimum competency test, the student who passes such a test may receive a standard diploma, or may receive a diploma with an endorsement or accompanying certificate of competency achievement. Students in these programs who fail the competency tests may receive only a certificate attesting to the fact that all other graduation requirements (as attendance or course credits) have been met. New York, a State with a program which requires its students to demonstrate competency as a prerequisite for graduation, permits students to meet this requirement in one of two ways: they may take and pass the State tests, or they may, as a substitute for these tests, take and achieve a satisfactory score on one of the two standardized college admissions examinations approved by the State.

Remediation for deficient students can be mandatory or optional; it does not imply, however, that such programs are inferior to those in which test results may dictate more radical curriculum changes. For those competency programs in which remediation is the primary focus, students may receive remediation by means as diverse as providing extra attention and special remedial materials in the regular classroom setting, establishing remedial classes for specific students, or employing such innovative methods as the outreach program initiated in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school district. In that district, when a student has failed either the State or district-level competency test, a community contact person visits both student and parents in the home, if necessary, to encourage attendance at the special tutorial centers which operate after regular school hours.

For programs. Some minimum competency testing programs are so designed that test results have a far-reaching effect on the established curriculum. In these programs, test results not only identify student deficiencies, they can also point out inadequacies in the instructional program. For the most part, however, curriculum modification to remedy such weaknesses is optional.

Competencies

Emphasis. Competencies selected for a minimum competency program may be of two kinds: the academic skills, and the so-called life skills. The two categories are not mutually exclusive, however. Academic skills can be characterized as those which have been traditionally taught in the schools, as reading, writing, and mathematics. Life skills, as they occur in the context of the minimum competency programs in this study, would appear to require the transfer and application of academic skills in practical situations which duplicate or simulate those encountered outside the school environment. As an illustration, a minimum competency program may set an academic skill requirement in mathematics; the life skill analogue might be a requirement that students demonstrate the ability to use computational skills to balance a checkbook. Some of the programs select only academic skills, some select life skills, and other programs select skills of both varieties.

Source. The source for the competencies assessed may be the State or the local districts. Only when the State is the initiator of the minimum competency program, however, is it possible to find that the selection of competencies has been delegated to the local unit. Therefore, programs may be classified as State programs in which the State also selects competencies, State programs in which local districts select the competencies, and local district programs in which the competencies are selected by the local district. The Massachusetts program straddles the first two categories, since the State develops the competencies at the secondary-school level and delegates the responsibility for the elementary-level competencies to the local districts.

When the State permits the local districts to develop and select the competencies for assessment, it may do so by specifying the areas in which assessment is to occur; California, for example, mandates assessment in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics. Alternatively, the State may merely establish broad goals to guide the local districts, as Oregon, which specifies that its local districts must test both for life-oriented skills and traditional academic skills.

Specific areas by grades tested. Programs may also be classified with respect to the grade levels at which testing occurs and with respect to the competency areas tested at each grade level. It appears to be the case that almost all competency programs assess students at least once in grades 9-12 in at least two competencies--reading and mathematics. If a third competency area is also tested at this or any other level, it will

most probably involve some form of writing or communication skill. These three competencies, whether in an academic or life skill context, appear in a majority of the programs. Writing, however, appears less frequently as a competency for testing, perhaps because the writing skills are more difficult and time-consuming to assess.

If the minimum competency program has selected communication skills as one area of competency for testing, then it is sometimes the case that skills in communication may be added to the three central competencies. Skills in speaking and listening are tested in some programs; these skills usually occur together if they occur at all, although the Omaha, Nebraska program is an exception to this rule. It is also possible to make a generalization about the skills and competency areas enumerated up to this point: if a program has selected its competencies from this set, it tests these skills at all levels of the program. The only apparent exception to this principle occurs in programs which administer some form of Readiness Test to pupils upon entry to the elementary level.

With respect to competencies in such areas as science, history and government, problem solving, or consumer awareness, there appears to be no consistent pattern of selection or occurrence, except for the rather obvious observation that programs which have developed competencies in such areas tend to initiate instruction and testing for these skills at grade levels which are appropriate to their content. Therefore, we find that career skills or the skills and knowledge of the democratic process, for example, are tested at the high school level, when these skills are considered most likely to be useful to students.

Standards

One of the two major characteristics of minimum competency testing programs that distinguishes them from other types of testing programs is the presence of a defined standard of performance that students are expected to meet. Who sets the standards and the basis upon which they are determined appear to be the major dimensions along which programs can vary; each is described below.

Source. While local programs which grow up independently of State requirements clearly set their own performance standards, setting standards in State programs may be the responsibility of either the State or the individual local districts, or both. In programs such as Nevada and Idaho, for example, the State has set standards on State-selected or

State-developed instruments. While Idaho has a district-option program, all students in local districts which opt to participate in the program are subject to the same standards; and in Nevada, all students in the State are required to meet the State standard. By contrast, in some State programs, including California and Massachusetts, the local school districts assume all responsibility for setting performance expectations. California and Massachusetts differ from one another in that the districts in California are responsible for developing all aspects of the testing program under the State's directive, whereas in Massachusetts, the State offers the local districts the use of a State-developed instrument for secondary-level testing.

In programs such as California, New Mexico, and Hillsborough County, Florida, the State sets standards on some tests while the local districts determine standards on others. In Hillsborough County, results of both State and locally developed competency tests help to identify students in need of remediation. State standards determine passing scores for the State tests, while local standards were set by Hillsborough County staff for the county tests.

Exceptions to the patterns of standard-setting responsibility described above include minimum competency programs for which standards have not yet been set. Another notable exception is Nebraska, in which the State has developed standards to be used in conjunction with the State tests, but does not require that the districts use these tests. Local districts are allowed to determine standards for the tests that they develop.

Basis. Standards can be set for a test as a whole, for particular subject areas, and for subsets of items comprising a subject area. In some cases, usually where the State and the local school districts both determine standards, the basis for setting them may vary. Thus, for example, in Virginia the State specifies that a standard for tests in reading and mathematics will be determined for each subject area, while the basis for setting standards for tests in other competency areas is a decision left to the local districts. The basis for setting standards may also vary because the State permits the use of this standard in scoring the test. For example, in Nevada a student can achieve an overall score of 75% or better or answer a certain number of items correctly that measure each skill in order to pass the competency test.

Test Instruments

At least three major types of variation can occur with respect to the testing component of a competency testing program. First, either the State or the local districts or both may have the responsibility for developing the testing component of the program. When the local districts have that responsibility, their decisions may be either independent of the State or contingent upon State approval. A shared responsibility for test development between local districts and the State generally means that the State takes charge of developing the tests for one part of the competency program while the local districts must develop whatever other tests are required. Entirely local responsibility for test development may occur at the directive of a State or in States which have no statewide minimum competency testing requirements.

The second major type of variation in the testing component of minimum competency programs concerns how the responsibility for test development is actually carried out. Tests can be selected from the array of commercial instruments available, they can be developed from start to finish, or they can be adapted by a test publisher from existing instruments to meet a program's specific needs. If a State or local district chooses to develop its test instruments, if may then decide whether to contract the work to an external agency or to complete the development activities using its own in-house expertise.

Finally, the test instruments themselves may provide a basis for variation in that the test format may range from all multiple-choice items to a mixture of multiple-choice and open-ended items (e.g., a writing sample) to all performance-based items.

Responsibility for test development. Examples of minimum competency programs in which the locus of test development responsibility lies at the State level include Florida, New York, New Jersey, and Idaho, among others. In all of these except Idaho, all local districts are required to administer the test(s) developed or selected by the State; in Idaho, those local districts which choose to participate in the State's proficiency testing program are subject to all State requirements in relation to the program. In marked contrast to these programs are those such as California and Illinois, in which all test development or selection occurs at the local level. Both of these States provide various forms of technical assistance to their local school districts, but they differ in that California districts are required to implement competency testing whereas Illinois districts participate on a voluntary basis only.

Finally, programs in which the responsibility for test development is shared in some way between the State and the local school districts include, for example, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Nebraska, and Connecticut. While these programs may all be classified under the same broad heading, the way in which the sharing comes about differs significantly among them. In Kentucky, for instance, the State provides a screening instrument to be administered in all districts. Districts are then to follow the screening test with a diagnostic one, which they may either obtain from the State or select themselves with approval from the State. In Massachusetts, on the other hand, the secondary-level test instrument provided by the State is only one option available to the local districts; they may, with State approval, elect to administer another commercial instrument or a locally developed one. Also in Massachusetts, the local districts have almost complete autonomy in selecting or developing tests to be administered at the elementary level; only their program plans need to be relayed to the State.

Connecticut's competency testing program appears similar to that in Massachusetts in that the State retains responsibility for the secondary-level test but leaves elementary-level testing in the hands of the local districts. The difference between the two is that local districts in Connecticut are required to utilize the State test; they do not have the option that Massachusetts districts do of selecting an alternate instrument for secondary-level testing.

Finally, Nebraska has developed a set of measures that meet the State requirements for testing and which it offers to local districts as a means for them to comply with those requirements. Use of the test, however, is entirely optional; local districts may choose to take charge of all testing themselves.

Source of test development/selection. Kentucky, North Carolina, Omaha (Nebraska), and Lawton (Michigan) are examples of programs which make use of commercial test instruments. Kentucky selected the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) as the screening test which most closely matched Kentucky curriculum and objectives and then chose the Prescriptive Reading Inventory and the Diagnostic Mathematics Inventory as diagnostic instruments, also felt to be good matches to the instructional materials being used in Kentucky.

While commercial test instruments were also selected for use in North Carolina's program, they were tailored by the test publisher to North Carolina's specific needs. Tailored verions of the Senior High Assessment of Reading Performance (SHARP) and the Test of Performance in Computational Skills (TOPICS) are therefore being utilized in North Carolina.

Like the State program in Kentucky, the local district program in Lawton, Michigan utilizes only a commercial test, the Adult Performance Level (APL) test. Finally, in contrast to all of the above programs, the program in Omaha, Nebraska makes use of commercial test instruments for assessing only some of its competency areas. There, the Gates-McGinitie test was selected to assess reading and the Beckman-Beal Mathematical Competencies Test for Enlightened Citizens was selected for the mathematics assessment; tests for the remaining competency areas were all developed in-house.

Programs which have chosen to utilize consulting services for all or part of their test development effort include Maryland, New Jersey, and Virginia; while all State test development in New Jersey has been completed by an external contractor, Virginia has chosen to have only some of its tests developed by a contracting agency. One point to note about the use of contractors for test development is that very few local districts responsible for test development have chosen contractors as a means of carrying out that responsibility.

Finally, while utilizing in-house expertise for test development is commonly combined with other strategies for developing or selecting tests, it is seldom followed as the sole means for acquiring instruments to be administered in a testing program. Michigan and Missouri are two examples of programs in which department specialists and committees had the sole responsibility for developing the instruments in use in those programs.

Response mode of test instruments. Conceivably, more variation in test response mode could occur in minimum competency testing programs than actually did occur in this study. For the most part, available commercial tests are of a paper-and-pencil, multiple-choice format. Most developed instruments, either by in-house specialists or by external contractors, also follow that format. Variation can and does occur, however, in those programs which choose to assess writing (e.g., Nevada, Salem, Portland) and in those which also assess performance-based, life-oriented skills (e.g., Nebraska, South Burlington, and Contoocook Valley). In those programs, students may be required to complete such tasks as write an essay, demonstrate the use of a telephone in a simulated emergency situation, or give oral directions to a specified location.

Test Administration

The dimensions of test administration along which programs can vary center around the issues of who has responsibility for test administration and what kinds of procedures they may choose to use. In local district programs that are separate from and independent of State programs, local staff administer any tests that are given. In State programs, however, either the local districts or the State may have administrative responsibilities. For State-developed instruments, the State may either provide its own proctors or may require the local school districts to provide them. When local districts have options for test instrument development or selection, they generally also have responsibility for administering the tests.

Little variation actually occurs in the mix of responsibility for giving competency tests. In most programs, local school and district personnel take charge of test administration. In a few cases, such as Connecticut, the State administers a State test at one level and leaves the local districts to administer their own tests at other levels.

With respect to specific procedures for administering competency tests, only one program, South Burlington, Vermont, has administration procedures which deviate significantly from standard testing methods. In this program, mentors, who can be either classroom teachers or school administrators, meet once a week with students assigned to them in order to assess those students' mastery of basic competencies. In this program, too, the testing of competencies occurs at the point at which the individual competencies are expected to be mastered within the curriculum.

Scoring

Once again, variation among programs occurs with respect to scoring. Tests can be scored either by the State, local districts, an independent agency under contract to a State or local agency, or the test publisher. On the chart, the programs have been classified according to who actually scores the tests rather than who has the responsibility for ensuring that the tests are scored. Thus, for example, although the State of Michigan is responsible for ensuring that the statewide assessments are scored, an outside contractor provides scoring services.

Reporting/Dissemination

A clear distinction between State and local programs is evident in regard to who receives their reports. Reports summarizing test results on one level or another (individual, classroom, school, district, State) may be sent to students, parents, teachers, the State or local Board of Education, school administrators, legislators, and the public and/or the media. In general, students and parents in both State and local district programs are the recipients of individual score reports, and parents have access to summary reports. Teachers receive their own students' score reports and have access to summary reports more often in local than in State programs. In most States and a few local district programs, the Board of Education receives reports of test results, and in most programs of either type, school administrators receive such results. Legislators are informed of test results in only the State programs, with the exception of Santa Clara, California, which provides reports to the legislature under a State directive. Finally, the public, through the media, has access to test results in a higher percentage of State than local programs.

Parent/Citizen Involvement

The variation that can occur across programs with respect to the involvement of parents and citizens relates to how these groups participate and in what parts of the program they participate. The study showed four major areas of program development and implementation to be those in which parents and citizens can become actively involved: policy recommendation, competency definition, standard setting, and test item bias review. Their type of involvement can then range from serving on committees charged with carrying out these tasks to responding to surveys which will provide adjunct information to the accomplishment of these tasks.

On the chart, a classification indicating parent and citizen involvement in recommending policy implies that representatives of these groups have actually served on committees whose responsibilities included recommending specific policies for the MCT program. While public surveys were frequently conducted in many of the programs to help determine public reaction to minimum competency testing, this activity did not often include involving the public in policy decision-making. A program such as Alabama's, for one, is therefore notable in its inclusion of citizens and parents on its Committee of 100, the body which recommends policies to the State Board of Education.

Item bias review is another task which is generally accomplished by committees. Therefore, parent and citizen involvement in this activity would be through representatives of the groups serving on such a committee.

While parents and citizens can also serve on competency and standard setting committees, their responding to surveys can be an integral part of the process used to validate the competencies and standards. Therefore, on these two subcategories, a classificaton of parent/citizen involvement may imply their participation on committees or in surveys.

Finally, it is important to note that parents and citizens in such states as California and Illinois, for example, are shown to be involved in various program components because these state programs recommend such involvement to their local districts. In these cases, however, the ultimate decision regarding parent/citizen involvement is left to the local districts.

Provisions for Special Populations

Some of the programs in this study either do not make or have not yet made any provisions for the special populations in their schools. The majority of the competency testing programs, however, have adopted some method of dealing with the students who are members of this class. The program itself may establish and define the category of special student populations, it may incorporate the definitions set out in an earlier legislative or educational code, or it may simply provide guidelines for establishing such a category to assist the local units participating in the program. In any case, these programs may be divided into two groups: those in which such students are excluded from the testing component of the minimum competency program, and those in which these students participate in all components of the program in some way.

Formal provisions which minimum competency testing programs make for special populations can set up subclasses as numerous and as well-defined as those of the California program, which deals with adult basic education students, minority students, limited English-speaking students, students from migrant worker families, and special education students identified by means of several criteria established by the State as guidelines for the local districts. By contrast with the California program, the Oregon program leaves the issue of special populations in the hands of the local school districts; local districts have complete freedom to alter or waive the State performance requirements to suit the needs of the individual

student. It should be noted that almost all the testing programs dealing with the issue of special populations agree in one respect: these programs all make some provision for special education students.

Regardless of whether a program recognizes one subgroup or many in the category of special populations, the program may be classified with respect to the basis upon which it makes provisions for these students. Some programs deal with such students as members of a group, and then establish or suggest appropriate procedures and methods by which each group can participate in the competency program. Other programs make formal provisions on an individual basis, and still others, which make formal provisions neither for groups nor individuals, choose to deal with special population students on a case-by-case basis.

The nature of the provisions for special populations offers another dimension for classifying programs. There are three possibilities: the program may set differential standards for these students, it may provide test instruments with different content for them, or it may provide tests with different formats appropriate to the needs of the subgroup or the individual student. No one program, it appears, employs all three possibilities.

Given the number of dimensions on which programs may differ in their treatment of special populations, it is to be expected that there would be a wide range of differing patterns, and this, in fact, is the case. For example, both the Oregon and North Carolina programs make their provisions on a case-by-case basis for special education students. Oregon, on the one hand, permits its local school districts to set differential standards and to use tests with different content for these students. On the other hand, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction has developed Braille and taped versions of its standard tests for use with students with visual or hearing impairments. Two programs with formal provisions for groups or individuals, the Massachusetts and California programs, display the following differences. In the Massachusetts testing program transfer students, special education students, and limited English-speaking students are the three subgroups established in the category of special populations. Students who transfer to a new district after completing the tenth grade are exempted from the annual basic skills test reports made by their new district. Special education students receive Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) tailored to their particular needs, and the same team which designs a student's IEP also determines whether that student is to be assessed for the achievement of minimum standards, and whether the results of such testing are to be included in the annual summary statistics of the school district. Limited English-speaking students are exempted from the regulations of the basic skills policy. Bilingual students who have completed a transitional bilingual education program, however, participate in the State program, just as all other students do.

California's testing program permits the establishment of differential standards only for students who are enrolled in special education programs according to the definitions of the State code. Moreover, if a local school district decides to establish differential standards, the local district must do so for all its special education students who are assigned an IEP. For non- or limited English-speaking students, the California program specifies that the graduation requirements must be met in English, but does not prohibit local districts from assessing these students both in English and in the native language of the student. To deal with the difficulties which transfer students encounter in moving to a school district with different proficiency requirements, the State of California has formed a task force to study the problems of students from migrant worker families, and to make recommendations to the local districts on ways to help these students.

Finally, it is possible to classify all programs--both those which exempt students from testing and those which do not--with respect to the diplomas awarded to graduating students in the category of special populations. The majority of the minimum competency programs appear to have made no distinction between the graduation diplomas which special populations receive, even when programs exempt these students from all or part of the graduation requirements. A small number of program, however, award a certificate of completion rather than the standard graduation diploma. Orange County, Virginia, as one example, exempts its special education students from competency testing. Instead, upon achievement of the performance standards set for the individual student in an IEP, that student receives a certificate of program completion.

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APPENDIX A:

Definitions of Typology Dimensions

Policy

Initial mandate. The initial mandate for a minimum competency testing program is that policy or action which has caused it to come into being. The essential characteristic of the mandates for MCT that is indicated here is its Source, i.e., did a legislative body or state or local Board of Education mandate the minimum competency testing program? The nature of the mandate may vary at all levels. For example, a mandate issued by a legislative body or by a state or local Board may contain only general program guidelines and goals or list the specific tasks to be delegated to particular groups or individuals (e.g., the Commissioner of Education). With respect to programs mandated by local school Boards, it should be noted that in some cases the legislature or state Board has subsequently issued a similar mandate. Programs such as these are denoted by a special symbol entered under the "Local Board Action" heading.

Date of initial mandate. The dates listed are taken from official documents and refer to when the legislation became law or when the state or local Board adopted a policy on minimum competency testing.

Date of completed implementation. The dates listed are those indicating when implementation either has been or is expected to be fully completed. In cases where a program will be implemented in stages, the date at which the last stage will be completely implemented is given.

Associated litigation. Under this category, whether or not legal action has been taken against a program and, if it has, the level at which it was filed are specified. In cases where there has been associated litigation, it is listed as being filed either at the federal or at the state (and local) levels.

Use of Test Results

This dimension refers to how, in the testing program, the student achievement results of the minimum competency tests are to be used. This dimension also incorporates the purposes of each program since it is these purposes which will establish the framework for how results will be reported, to whom they will be reported, and how they will be utilized.

Competencies

Competencies are those skill statements or performance objectives that each program defines for testing. Since these are generally defined by subject area, that is how they are presented here. By Emphasis is indicated the orientation or type of skills (academic vs. life skills) that has been identified in each program; who has the responsibility for identifying the specific competencies for assessment is indicated as the Source. Under Specific Area by Grades Tested, programs are classified according to which subject areas they assess and at which grade levels these areas are assessed. It should be noted that programs employing a variable testing schedule are specially marked since they cannot be classified along these dimensions.

Standards

Standards refer to the levels of performance required of students in order for them to pass the competency tests. On the chart, who is responsible for determining the performance standards is indicated as the Source, and on what basis, or how, the standards are set is shown by the Basis.

Test Instruments

"Test instruments" means, simply, the competency tests being utilized in the testing program. Who is charged with the task of developing or selecting the tests is designated under Responsibility. How the tests actually came into existence within each testing program (e.g., developed in-house or by a contractor, etc.) is indicated by Source. And Response Mode denotes the types of questions that comprise the test instruments in use in each program.

Test Administration

In this dimension, who in each program has responsibility for administering the competency tests is listed.

Scoring

This dimension designates who actually scores the tests. It should be noted that in some cases, although the state may be charged with the responsibility for scoring the tests, the tests are actually scored by a contractor; in keeping with the classification scheme here, such programs are then categorized under the heading "Contractor/Publisher."

Reporting/Dissemination

In any MCT program, information about the program is reported in various ways to various audiences. This dimension indicates to whom the test results in particular from each program are reported.

Parent/Citizen Involvement

Whether and how parents and/or citizens have gotten involved in the planning, development, and implementation of various aspects of individual MCT programs is documented here. Participation can be direct (e.g., serving on committees) or indirect (e.g., responding to surveys).

Provisions for Special Populations

In MCT programs, not all students will necessarily be subject to the same set of requirements. Various subgroups of students, such as the handicapped or those in special education programs, may be subject to different requirements or provisions.

Any provisions made. This category provides classification of programs by whether they make provisions for any special populations and, if they do, what general sort of provisions are made. It should be noted that in some cases a state or district may recognize more than one special population and exempt some while making varying provisions for others. In the table, for programs like these, multiple checks are entered to indicate the variation in the handling of special populations.

Formal provisions for. Programs are broken down here according to which special populations they make provisions for. Programs may make formal provisions for all, some, or none of the groups listed.

Types of provisions made. The specific sorts of arrangements that each MCT program makes for the various special populations are indicated by this dimension. As previously mentioned, it is not always the case that the same provisions will be made for all populations that are treated in a special way; rather, specific provisions may be matched to particular populations.